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CHILE:

Renewal of State of Siege

[REDACTED] hardliners, led by the Justice Minister and several Army generals close to President Pinochet, prevailed in the debate on extending the state of siege to 6 May. [REDACTED]

Regime spokesmen claim the renewal, which was announced last week, is necessary to combat terrorism, prevent organized protests, and to sober the political opposition. [REDACTED] the hardliners want to slow the transition to democratic rule. [REDACTED]

Although moderate military officers reportedly support tough measures against terrorists, they are concerned about the strain the state of siege places on the armed forces. They also fear that antimilitary sentiment will increase. [REDACTED]

Meanwhile, security forces have resumed sweeps of poor neighborhoods and have raided the national journalist union to halt publication of a newsletter intended to bypass censorship. [REDACTED]

Comment: Pinochet evidently believes that extending the state of siege will enable the government to maintain security, keep political opponents off balance, and return the transition process to the slower constitutional timetable. The new actions against slumdweller and the journalist union, along with the recent arrests of leftist political figures and hundreds of students, emphasize the regime's determination to limit protests planned for next month. [REDACTED]

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